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## THE FIRST MASTER OF CEREMONIES OF THE WHITE HOUSE.

By JOHN H. McCORMICK, M.D.

(Read before the Society May 11, 1903.)

The makers of history are not always those known to fame, but are sometimes comparatively obscure persons, who, from one cause or another, soon pass from the public gaze, if indeed they ever enjoyed it. Perhaps nowhere else, as in Washington, are there so many examples of men and women whose quiet and unostentatious influence has shaped public events, yet the people themselves remain unknown save to a small circle of friends and acquaintances and their actions lie buried in the public archives and in the memory of their friends.

Of such a one this paper will speak, a man lost to fame save for a single deed. One who, by his silent yet active influence at a critical period in our national history, helped to avert many serious diplomatic complications, and by his knowledge of European court life succeeded in unravelling many tangled skeins in official circles. Such a man was Jean Pierre Sioussat, the First Master of Ceremonies of the White House.

Considered from a purely historical standpoint, it is always of some distinction to have been the first in any walk of life, whether the position be one of high or low degree. To understand, therefore, the part played by this man in public affairs, it will be necessary to consider the time in which he lived and the conditions by which he was surrounded.

It was a time which separated the gold from the dross and the refining process brought to the surface many who had been hitherto unknown and unheeded, while many others were swept from their high and apparently secure pedestals to be lost or buried in the débris of passing events. Some of these characters have a place upon the pages of history, others live only in the memories of those who cherished their worth.

It may be interesting to recall the fact that almost from the dawn of our nation's independence our national history was interwoven with the personality and the actions of those who had been associated with historic scenes and characters of France. Certainly every one of our Presidents from Washington to Monroe had felt this influence. By a curious coincidence this thread began with the first coming of Lafayette to assist in fighting for our independence, and ended only when on September 7, 1825, America's greatest foreign friend, the same Lafayette, now grown old with years, bade farewell to President Monroe at the White House and slowly sailed down the Potomac River. Amid the tolling of the bells of the passing craft, sounding as a requiem to the survivor, with eyes filled with tears, he gazed for the last time upon the final resting place of his comrade in arms at Mount Vernon. Who can tell of the emotions which filled the breast of this gentle, yet heroic soul as his ship glided slowly onward, until the evening shadows encompassed him round about and in person to America he was forever lost.

The thread of France interwoven with the Madison administration was in the person of Jean Pierre Sious-sat, who played an important part in the making of Mrs. Madison's successful régime in the White House one long to be remembered.

Not the least vexing of the many vexatious questions which obtruded themselves to the confounding of our early statesmen was that of precedence and procedure in official and social functions. Like Banquo's ghost it would not down, but returned again and again, like that unlaid spirit, to haunt them and to taunt them.

Few of us realize the great influence this question had in determining not only the policy many times of this government but, indeed, of the very form of the new republic itself. Space does not admit of a discussion of this question more than to say that the contention for supremacy between the ultra-royalists and the ultra-democrats resulted, as usual, in a compromise.

The first administration, presided over by Washington, by nature and by education an aristocrat, was dignified and conservative, partaking very largely of the social customs of the exclusive circles in which the President moved. A touch of the old world courts was added by the versatile, brilliant, forceful genius of Hamilton, who of all men was the only one who could influence Washington by his mere personality; when to this he added the weight of his persuasive argument, he was well-nigh irresistible. So Hamilton largely dominated the first administration and was largely responsible for many of the customs instituted in official life.

Adams, the personification of dignity and courtesy, had unconsciously become more formal and conventional by his residence abroad. The atmosphere of the staid, old Philadelphia society, where first as Vice-President, and afterwards as Chief Executive, he passed almost the whole of his official life, was well suited to his tastes and his ideals. His administration was in many respects a social replica of that of his predecessor. The few months of his stay in Washington, in an unfinished executive mansion, or President's Palace,

as it was then derisively called, were too short and filled with too much bitterness to admit of much in the way of official functions.

Jefferson ruthlessly tore away all formality in official life and revelled in what he called "democratic simplicity." Indeed, to Jefferson are we indebted for much of the lightness of esteem with which we for many years were held by foreign nations. His lack of social etiquette, studied and purposed on his part, led him into many difficulties with our accredited diplomats. The slights, impositions, indignities and even insults heaped upon us were allowed to pass without more than a feeble protest, if as much, while our enemies laughed openly at our supineness and puerility. It was, however, the sleeping giant, who only turned restlessly in his slumbers at the prods of his tormenters. The time was to come when all the world became aware that the lethargy was at an end, and that when "Your Uncle Samuel" stretched forth his ponderous arm, all the world bowed before his uplifted finger, and exclaimed "Oh! Excuse me" and gracefully retired.

So it was to Madison, poor man, already weighted down with the fruits of his predecessor's mistakes, to whom fell the task of establishing the official social régime that in most respects was to persist to this day. Like the wise man he was, he turned this part of his task over to his wife, the charming Dolly Madison.

Unlike those who preceded her in this office, for the mistress of the White House is, after a manner, as much of an official as her husband, Mrs. Madison had not the advantages of foreign court life.

By nature sociable and affable, large-hearted and hospitable, she undertook the task with cheerfulness, to which was added a determination to relieve her overburdened husband of a duty exceedingly distasteful to

him. She bent her wonderful energy to the work with consummate skill and tact. How well she succeeded is evidenced by the fact that, of the wives of all the Presidents, she was the only one who exercised as much social sway in official life after her retirement from the White House as she did before. Her house in Washington was designated the "little White House," and visitors of note, after leaving the President, invariably called to pay their respects to Mrs. Madison.

Without training in court etiquette, she started handicapped at a critical period of our national history, when a contretemps in precedence or procedure might mean an immediate declaration of war. To supply this lack on her part, she determined to have a master of ceremonies to assist her in her arduous and intricate social duties. She found such a one in the person of Jean Pierre Sioussat, a Frenchman who had in his youth seen much of court life in Paris. Thus was instituted the office of Master of Ceremonies at the White House, one of those official fictions so common in Washington, for while no such office did or could officially exist, as a matter of fact such an official was much in evidence. It is the same to-day.

This young man, for at the time of Mrs. Madison's entrance into the White House he lacked six months of being twenty-eight, had had a most romantic and adventurous career.

As shown by the parish register, he was born in the parish of St. Paul, Paris, September 22, 1781. Of his childhood nothing is known until the age of twelve, at which time occurred the "Reign of Terror." Living within a stone's throw of the Rue St. Antoine, the direct route from the Tuilleries to the Bastille, and midway between the two, he was compelled to witness many of the horrors of that inhuman pandemonium.

He often told, in a graphic manner, of the exciting scenes witnessed by himself during that turbulent period. Of how on January 21, 1793, his father raised him above the crowd to witness the beheading of King Louis XVI., and a few months later the guillotining of Marie Antoinette. About this time, his parents having died, he together with his three sisters became wards of the Church of Rome. The three girls were placed in a convent, two of them there to remain separated from the world as members of the communion, while his youngest sister, Aimée, afterwards became the companion of a wealthy French lady. Young Jean was designed by the Church authorities to become a priest, and in the course of his ecclesiastical studies he obtained a most excellent education. In after life he frequently would sing entire masses, taking up every part in turn, as lullabies to his children. Born at the close of the American Revolution and nurtured in the turbulent period of the Reign of Terror, the adventurous spirit of the boy burst asunder the narrow boundaries of his environment, and at the age of seventeen, without the knowledge or consent of his superiors, he exchanged the cassock and the cloister for the freedom and adventure of a sailor's life. He embarked first in the merchant service, during which time he sailed several times around the world. He then embarked in the French navy, but not fancying this, he determined at the first favorable opportunity to quit the service. Accordingly in 1804, when on the French frigate which was lying in New York harbor under waiting orders to convey Jerome Bonaparte and his bride, Miss Patterson, of Baltimore, to the Continent, he slipped over the side of the vessel and swam to the shore. Arriving in New York unknown, a stranger in a strange land, without means, and unable to speak the language of the

country, the prospect seemed indeed gloomy and uninviting. Nothing daunted, however, he made his way to the city of Washington, and there by some means obtained the favor of the British minister, who invited him to become one of his official family. In what capacity, or how long he stayed, it is impossible to say, but that his service there must have been agreeable and satisfactory was evident, because notwithstanding the fact that Minister Merry had quarreled with President Jefferson on account of his official preference for Mrs. Madison, according her precedence over Minister Merry's wife, we find the young Frenchman, Jean Pierre Sioussat, a frequent visitor at the White House. Soon after the elevation of Mr. Madison to the Presidency, we find Jean Sioussat a member of the official staff at the White House. Beginning as doorkeeper, he soon relinquished this to become the confidential agent of Mrs. Madison in executing the multiplicity of duties which this charming hostess required under the new régime which she instituted at the White House.

During the greater part of Mrs. Madison's occupancy of the White House he acted as Master of Ceremonies, his knowledge of French customs being of unusual value in determining many minor points of procedure in official functions.

The peculiar conditions influencing the social side of the White House at that day have never been fully recognized nor appreciated. Mrs. Madison had to hew her way through prejudice, intrigue and violent opposition, both foreign and domestic. The war cloud looming in the distance only complicated matters and made the task more difficult. In her dilemma she turned to Jean Pierre Sioussat, who had by his charming personality and suave manner captivated all who came in contact with him. Tall and stately, of digni-



fied bearing, he was a host in himself; tactful, resourceful and omnipresent, a good scholar, a linguist of no mean order, his French accent but lending charm to his conversation, he was never at a loss for a suggestion. With him, in the conception of a plan, was it half done, so minute and orderly were the details worked out.

Mrs. Madison so learned to depend upon him that before long he took almost entire charge of her personal affairs, a relationship that existed many years after her departure from the White House, and terminated only with her death. Many letters to Mr. Sious-sat, still in the hands of his descendants, show the intimate friendship existing between them.

His knowledge of French customs stood him in good stead, being of unusual value in determining many minor points of procedure in official functions. The issuance of invitations, the arrangement of the order of precedence, the arrangement of State dinners, the provision for the reception of guests, the looking after the furniture and decorations, were some of the manifold duties he performed.

It must be remembered that the city of Washington at that time was but little more than a straggling village and that it was impossible to provide many of the needed things from the city shops.

Mrs. Madison herself was the center around which revolved the society of the day, both official and unofficial. Her personality pervaded the whole gathering. This has been attested by no less a personage than Washington Irving, who attended one of Mrs. Madison's levees in 1811. He says:

"I emerged from dirt and darkness into the blazing and splendor of Mrs. Madison's drawing room. Here I was most

graciously received; found a crowded collection of great and little men, of ugly old women and beautiful young ones, and in ten minutes was hand in glove with half of the people of the assemblage. Mrs. Madison is a fine portly buxom dame, who has a smile and a pleasant word for everybody. Her sister, Mrs. Cutts, and Mrs. Washington are like the two merry wives of Windsor; but as to Jemey Madison, ah, poor Jemey—he is but a withered little apple John.”

For the first time the society of the White House became natural, delightful and hospitable. Everyone was made to feel at home, and here friend and foe could meet upon a common ground—a marked contrast to the stiffness and formality of Washington and Adams and the reckless improvident methods of Jefferson. Dinner parties and receptions occurred weekly, and in addition the President held levees, at which times the Master of Ceremonies assisted in directing the movements of the guests.

The “dove parties,” so famous in Mrs. Madison’s administration of the social side of the White House, were inaugurated with a view to bringing the ladies of the Cabinet into a more real friendship with one another than the official functions could possibly give. Of course, but fragments of the details of these social features of Mrs. Madison’s time remain; nevertheless enough has been preserved to show her methods.

Without in the least suspecting, much less designing, this marvelous woman was the power behind the throne. What the famous women of France, England, Austria and other Continental countries failed to accomplish by intrigue, Mrs. Madison unwittingly performed by her sincerity, her straightforwardness and earnest desire to please every one. About the White House surged the contending forces bent upon the undoing of President Madison, either by forcing his hand

or involving him in still greater difficulties and complications. The consummate skill of Mrs. Madison repressed the one element and unknowingly destroyed the other. Without dabbling in politics, in the obnoxious sense of the word, without pretense or intrigue, by her diplomatic manner and personal charm, she so impressed everyone with whom she came in contact, that those who came to assail her husband remained to defend him.

In all her movements and endeavors she was ably seconded by Jean Sioussat. In her hour of danger, he remained her firm reliance; in her hour of despair, he was her comforter and ever-present help in time of trouble.

The contrast between the scene as described by Irving and that of a similar event, one of the weekly drawing rooms of President Monroe, is indeed great and shows the lack of a guiding hand. The *National Intelligencer*, a daily paper published at the time, thus describes the latter:

“The Secretaries, Senators, Foreign Ministers, Consuls. Auditors, Accountants, Officers of the Army and Navy of every grade, Farmers, Merchants, Parsons, Priests, Lawyers, Judges, Auctioneers, and Nothingarians, all with their wives and some with their gawky offsprings, crowd to the President's every Wednesday evening; some in shoes, most in boots, and many in slippers; some snuffing, others chewing and many longing for their cigars and whiskey-punches left at home; some with powdered heads, others frizzled and oiled, with some whose head a comb had never touched, half hid by dirty collars, reaching far above their heads, as stiff as paste-board.”

By the strange caprice of fortune the young Frenchman was destined to be surrounded by the activities

of war, for in his adopted country he was in the center of the excitement growing out of the second war with Great Britain. On the 24th of August, 1814, the British under General Ross and Admiral Cockburn entered the City of Washington for the purpose of capturing the President and his Cabinet and sacking the capital city. Advices of their approach having been received by the President in time, he together with his Cabinet, fled from the city to Brookville, Montgomery county, Md., leaving Mrs. Madison to make her way into Virginia. It was here that the wonderful activity of Jean Sioussat manifested itself. He took entire charge of the preparations of Mrs. Madison for her hasty journey, apparently forgetting nothing. The State papers placed in boxes and with the silver plate and such other portable valuables as could be gotten together, were packed in a carriage and started for a place of safety. Among the things saved was Stuart's famous picture of Washington. The time was so short that it was impossible to remove the picture from its frame as desired by Mrs. Madison, who had given directions to her servants to that effect, so Mr. Sioussat coming into the room, witnessing their ineffectual efforts, cut the canvass with his penknife, removing it from the frame without injury. A number of legends have been recorded about the saving of this picture, but this is authentic, as will be shown by the following quotation taken from the records of the Oldest Inhabitants Association:

“Mr. Nicholas Callan, related an incident of the fire of 1814. When Mrs. President Madison found it unsafe to remain longer at the White-House, on account of the presence of the British troops, she left it in charge of the coachman and Jean Sioussat. To the latter she gave instructions to save the picture of Washington. He did so by cutting it from the

frame with his penknife, and it now adorns the same room in the Executive Mansion."

Mrs. Madison herself stated that this was the method of the preservation of the picture. Mr. Sioussat often told the story to his children and his grandchildren, and it was corroborated by the old colored coachman, Paul Jennings, who held the ladder while Mr. Sioussat cut the picture from the frame. He gave the picture to Messrs. Barker and Depeyster, who took it to a place of safety. After seeing everything safe he locked the doors and took the keys to the Russian Minister's, after which he and his family went to the French Minister's for protection. The French Minister then lived on I Street, between Sixteenth Street and Connecticut Avenue, in a house owned by Col. Bombas.

A number of Mr. Sioussat's descendants are now living, who have heard the story in all its details, and its confirmation from the lips of Mrs. Madison, during visits from her to Mr. Sioussat. She told the story to the children with a charm and grace as only she could do. In addition, the colored coachman, Paul Jennings, often told them the story which agrees in all essential details with the one cited before. A few quotations from Mrs. Madison's correspondence sets at rest any contention on the subject.

It will be recalled that the President and his Cabinet joined General Winder, at Bladensburg, to get nearer the scene of the conflict between our troops and those of the enemy. In a letter written to her sister, Tuesday, August 23, 1814, after citing the movements of the President and his desire that she care for the Cabinet papers, public and private, she says:

"I am accordingly ready; I have pressed as many cabinet papers into trunks as to fill our carriage; our private property

must be sacrificed as it is impossible to procure wagons for its transportation."

Mr. Sioussat was busy superintending these preparations and at the same time directing the movements of the servants, who had become demoralized from fear at the rumors of the approach of the enemy. His excitable French temperament and the scenes of bloodshed and carnage he had witnessed in his own land, filled him with a fiery zeal, and led him to propose the annihilation of the British by blowing them up with gunpowder, as was done in Paris a few years before, during the Reign of Terror. To this, of course, Mrs. Madison objected. Disappointed that he could not do this, he set about devising means for Mrs. Madison's hasty flight, for already the advance guard of the enemy were rapidly closing in upon the fated city. Such was the state of affairs at the close of Tuesday, the 23d.

On the following day at three o'clock she writes:

"At this late hour a wagon has been procured and I have filled it with plate and the most valuable portable articles belonging to the house. Whether it will reach its destination, the Bank of Maryland, or fall into the hands of British soldiery events must determine. Our friend Mr. Carroll has come to hasten my departure and in a very bad humor with me because I insist on waiting until the large picture of General Washington is secured, and it requires to be unscrewed from the wall. This process was found too tedious for these perilous moments. I have ordered the frame to be broken and the canvas to be taken out."

It was at this point that Mr. Sioussat entered the room, having returned from despatching the wagon above referred to to the Bank of Maryland. The facts

of the saving of the picture as related by Mr. Sioussat, corroborated by the colored man Paul Jennings, the coachman, hereafter referred to as one of the servants instructed to remove it, as will appear in her letter dated February 11, 1848, are as follows: The colored man Paul and another servant were attempting to unfasten the frame from the wall. This proving too slow, Mrs. Madison ordered the frame to be broken. Just as the first blow was struck Mr. Sioussat entered the room, and, observing the shiver running through the canvas, feared these repeated attacks would damage the painting. He therefore ordered Paul to desist, explained his plan to Mrs. Madison, and receiving her approval, ascended the ladder, held firmly in place by the servants, and with his pocket knife cut the canvas close to the frame.

In her letter Mrs. Madison tells the sequel:

“It is done, and the precious portrait placed in the hands of two gentlemen from New York for safe keeping! On handing the canvas to the gentlemen in question, Messrs. Barker & Depeyster, Mr. Sioussat cautioned them against rolling it up, saying that it would destroy the portrait. He was moved to do this because Mr. Barker started to roll it up for greater convenience for carrying.”

The picture was carried to a place of safety and afterwards restored to Mrs. Madison, as the following letter shows:

“WASHINGTON February 11th, 1848—

“*Dear Sir:*—

“I did not receive your favor containing the newspapers and therefore is my impatience to assure you of my gratitude for the interest you take in my defence in the little narrative of the picture rescue. You will see by the enclosed what was said at the time. The impression that Mr. Carroll saved Stuart’s portrait of Washington is erroneous. The paper

which was to accompany your letter has not reached me, but I have heard that his family believed he rescued it. On the contrary Mr. Carroll had left me to join Mr. Madison, when I directed my servants in what manner to remove it from the walls, remaining with them until it was done.

"I saw Mr. Barker and yourself (the two gentlemen alluded to) passing and accepted your offer to assist me in any way, by inviting you to help me to preserve this portrait, which you kindly carried between you, to the humble but safe roof which sheltered it a while. I acted thus because of my respect for General Washington—not that I desired to gain laurels; but, should there be a merit in remaining an hour in danger of liberty to save the likeness of anything the merit in this case belongs to me. Accept my respect and best wishes.

"D. P. MADISON."

"to ROBERT G. L. DEPEYSTER."

The following extract from "A Colored Man's Reminiscence of James Madison," by Paul Jennings, referred to as taking part in the picture episode confirms what has been said as to the part taken by Jean Sious-sat. This, together with other evidence submitted, should set at rest all controversy as to whom the honor should be given:

"It has often been stated in print that when Mrs. Madison escaped from the White House she cut out from the frame the large portrait of Washington (now in one of the parlors there) and carried it off. This is totally false. She had no time for doing it. It would have required a ladder to get it down. All she carried off was the silver in her reticule as the British were thought to be but a few squares off, and were expected every moment. John Suse, a Frenchman, then door-keeper, and still living, and Magraw the President's gardner took it down and sent it off on a wagon with some large silver urns and such other valuables as could be hastily got together.

"When the British did arrive they ate up the very dinner and drank the wines that I had prepared for the President's party."



The last paragraph disposes of another pleasing fiction often told of that day's proceeding. It has long been a puzzle to those who admired the charming Dolly Madison to reconcile this seeming blot upon her devotion to her country's cause. That she could be so heartless as to give a dinner party to her friends, as has so often been related, while her husband, home and country were in imminent danger from a foreign foe, caused her to be regarded by the reader of the legend as a modern female Nero. The truth was that Paul Jennings had prepared an ordinary meal for the refreshment of the President and such as accompanied him from the field that no time might be lost should they be compelled to leave the city and fly for safety into Virginia.

After the return of Mr. Madison to Washington, the President's home was temporarily located in the Octagon House at the northeast corner of Eighteenth Street and New York Avenue, then owned by Col. John Tayloe, the proprietor of Middlebrook House on Braddock road, one of the stopping places of President Adams on his initial journey to Washington. In this house was signed the treaty of Ghent by which peace was declared between Great Britain and the United States, a peace which has not been seriously disturbed to this day. The building is now owned and occupied by the Institute of American Architects. After using this building about a year the President removed to the "Six Buildings" at the corner of Nineteenth Street and Pennsylvania Avenue. All of these structures are still standing and occupied.

The latter continued to be the Executive Mansion throughout the remainder of Madison's administration. The White House, in the meantime, was being prepared for the reception of his successor, Mr. Monroe.

After the departure of Jean Sioussat from the White House, with the advent of President Monroe, the office of Master of Ceremonies ceased to exist as such until its revival by President Grant. And it may be of interest briefly to compare the office as it was during the occupancy of Jean Sioussat and as it is to-day.

General Grant, like Madison, was unfitted for the duties of host. He was cast in a sterner mould.

Life on the battlefield and in the camp, with all their attendant responsibilities and hardships, had not tended to soften or unbend an already taciturn nature and fit him for the social duties of the drawing room.

Realizing this, he devised a plan to revive the office of Master of Ceremonies. Of course such an office had no official existence, nor could our democratic form of government admit of such.

During the Civil War General Babcock had been closely associated with General Grant and it was the desire of the latter, when he became President, to have General Babcock near him at Washington. When the army had returned to a peace basis, General Babcock, like many other officers, returned to his former rank in the regular organization. That rank in his case was that of a major, but the pay was inadequate to maintain him in Washington, so President Grant had Congress pass a law fixing the rank of the Superintendent of Public Buildings and Grounds, as that of a colonel of engineers. General Babcock was then ordered to that post and made military aide to the President, which is in fact the official designation of him who is in reality the Master of Ceremonies at the White House.

The occupant of this office since that time has always been an officer in the Engineer Corps of the United States Army, and being a graduate of West Point is by education and training fully equipped for the ardu-

ous yet pleasant duty. A brief survey of his duties will give some idea of the magnitude of the task now imposed upon this officer.

The late incumbent, Col. Theodore A. Bingham, was without question the best equipped of all his predecessors for this multisided office, because of unusual advantages enjoyed by him. Chief among these is the fact that the unusual prominence of the United States in the last few years, as a diplomatic factor in the world's affairs, just prior to and subsequent to the war with Spain, has caused many functions to take place at the White House which have heretofore taken place in Europe. The many distinguished foreign visitors, and the necessity for their entertainment, by the President; also the now settled custom of the President visiting various parts of the country, all serve to bring the Master of Ceremonies into greater prominence, and entail on him new duties and afford a wider scope for the exercise of this office. To the training of a soldier in the case of Col. Bingham was added the advantages and polish of foreign diplomatic services, a post not enjoyed by any of his predecessors except Jean Sious-sat. For seven years, first as military attaché to the United States Embassy at Berlin, and afterwards at Rome, the two most formal of all European courts, he learned all the customs of court and diplomatic circles. Unlike many placed in such a position, Col. Bingham was a busy man, not a mere figure head. When ordered to the post of Superintendent of Public Buildings and Grounds, by President McKinley, and consequently Master of Ceremonies of the White House, he was thoroughly equipped for the arduous duty.

Having become acquainted at first hand with the criticisms of our neighbors abroad, and realizing our own deficiencies, he was prepared to overcome the one and to supply the other.

In addition to the care of the public buildings in the city of Washington, so far as the War Department has jurisdiction over them, and of all the city parks, statues and public grounds, this officer must also look after the thousand and one details of the White House. As military aide to the President, he must be present and assist at all diplomatic and other formal presentations. For instance, when a new ambassador is to be presented to the President, the Master of Ceremonies goes to the residence of the diplomat in question, in the President's carriage, and escorts him to the White House, and formally presents him to the President. The ambassador in a short speech presents his credentials, stating that his gracious majesty expresses his gratification at the felicitous relations existing between the two countries, and hopes that nothing may arise to disturb this feeling of amity.

The President, in accepting the credentials, welcomes the ambassador, and states that so far as the United States is concerned nothing shall disturb this friendship, if in our power to prevent. And the audience is over.

When a state dinner is to be given, the Master of Ceremonies sees that the invitations are properly prepared and sent out, then a diagram of the table is made with each person's name arranged in the order of his official precedence. These are filed away so that any question arising as to precedence can be settled by reference to the diagram.

In addition to the state and diplomatic dinners and receptions are the receptions to the members of Congress, to the Army and Navy, and the public receptions. At all of these functions the Master of Ceremonies has to plan the details and see that they are properly executed. He introduces all the guests to the President

and his receiving party, calling each one by name. In this particular the office of Master of Ceremonies differs now from that of the time of Jean Sioussat. The early administrations were always strongly flavored with the personnel of the Army. Indeed, nearly all officials of importance, in the new government, and most of the men of influence, were former officers in our army of the Revolution.

It was natural, therefore, that on state occasions some of the formality of the army should obtain in these official functions. One of the members of the military staff of the President was always selected to introduce state visitors.

Jean Sioussat, not being an officer in our military service, was, of course, not called upon for this function. But his services were nevertheless required many times to act as interpreter for foreigners who could not understand English.

Nowadays, however, the Master of Ceremonies must not only perform the official duties required of Jean Sioussat, but he must also introduce all official visitors to the President and perform a like service at all receptions.

But few men are fitted to perform this office. It needs but a moment's reflection to see that a man must be not only a fine linguist, but a ready one as well. He must know at an instant's glance the name and rank of every visitor, and must pronounce the same correctly, so that it does not jar on the visitor's ear. From English to French, from German to Italian or Russian, must he turn his brain and tongue with lightning-like rapidity.

With a White House entirely too small in size, and inadequate in its arrangements to accommodate the vast number of guests, the task becomes manifoldly more

difficult and perplexing. From the uncrowded conditions of the days of Jean Sioussat, when the city was a village and the entire country but a few millions of people, and a trip to the Capital City was no small undertaking, to a nation of over seventy millions, with rapid transit, it is not difficult to see the gigantic proposition that the Master of Ceremonies of to-day has to face. Nevertheless, so wonderfully systematized and so well is the work planned that it proceeds without a hitch.

So multitudinous are the duties, so great the amount of detail required for its prosecution that "the more and more the wonder grows that one small head could contain all it knows."

But to return to our text. At the close of Mr. Madison's administration he gave Mr. Sioussat a position in the old United States Bank, with which institution he remained until it closed its doors, by virtue of the action of President Jackson. Together with the cashier, Richard Smith, he went to the old bank of the Metropolis, the predecessor of the present National Metropolitan Bank, with which institution he remained until 1843, when he retired on account of age, and was succeeded by his son Frederick. Mr. Sioussat was married three times and had twelve children, but one of whom survives. His second wife, Charlotte Julia DeGraffe, the granddaughter of Jacobus DeGraffe, a Swedish nobleman, was a prominent member of Saint John's Episcopal Church, at the corner of Sixteenth and H Streets, northwest. It was in 1819 that she became connected with this church, and for five successive generations the same pew has been occupied without intermission. Of the grandchildren a number still live in Washington, and are more or less well known.

The original purpose of the writer of this paper was simply to exhibit to the Society an original picture of

the White House in 1811, together with several other objects of historic interest bearing upon the same subject.

Experts who have devoted considerable time to the study of this subject declare this picture to be the one known to be missing in the chain of evolution of the White House from its beginning to the present time, and by thus filling the heretofore existing hiatus the series is now complete.

So far as known it is the only one in existence. That it is genuine there can be no question, first because it corresponds in every detail, proving other drawings incorrect; second, it has been in the possession of Mr. Sioussat's family continuously since 1811, the date of its execution.

A study of the picture by Col. Theo. A. Bingham, late Superintendent of Public Buildings and Grounds, who is without question the most competent authority on the construction of the White House, and by his assistant, Mr. Fred D. Owen, and others, revealed so many interesting facts coupled with the romantic history of the preserver of the picture in whose family, as stated above, it has remained since 1811, that upon their request a more extended history is here given.

The picture shows the White House, as it looked in 1811, when Washington Irving visited it. It will be seen that the Ionic portico, which is such a feature of the north front at the present day, was not then built, but was added upon its restoration after the fire in 1814. The basement colonnade to the east was torn down by Jackson, and is now being restored to conform to the original plans. For many years the west colonnade was surmounted by a conservatory, but that has been removed, and at its western extremity, facing the War and Navy Building, is the President's office, a

one-story structure, which is a disgrace to its purpose and surroundings. This picture also shows the high-hip roof destroyed by the fire, which on restoration was lowered, so that it cannot be seen projecting above the colonnade coping of the exterior walls.

The letter shown is one of a number in the possession of Mr. Sioussat's descendants. It is dated December 10, 1840, and shows the active part Mr. Sioussat took in Mrs. Madison's affairs. It is well known that after the death of ex-President Madison, Mrs. Madison's affairs became much involved, and it was only by the delicate and loving assistance rendered to her by those who esteemed her, supplemented by an appropriation from Congress for the purchase of Mr. Madison's papers, that Mrs. Madison was saved from actual embarrassment. Among these ready friends Mr. Sioussat was counted not the least. For by his thoughtful and watchful care her property was saved from severe loss. Many of these letters are of too private a nature to be placed before the public gaze, as they indirectly tell of the privations endured by this winsome woman, from whom the goddess of fortune, once so bountiful, had now in the twilight of her life withdrawn its smiling face.

It is to the honor of the man that in the days of his prosperity he remembered and requited the friendship of former days. When Mr. Sioussat alone and friendless, on an alien shore, speaking with difficulty the language of the country, looked upon askance because of his nationality, which at that time was a bar to advancement, needed friendship and encouragement, he found a ready sympathizer in the person of the wife of the then Secretary of State, Mrs. Madison—a friendship which was to endure through all the varying vicissitudes of a changeful life and which terminated only



when the icy fingers of death snapped the brittle thread of life and forever severed the kindly, pure and gracious soul from the beautiful sculptured clay known in life as Dolly Madison.

So about those dark days of her life we shall draw the enveloping cloak of forgetfulness and with gentle memory recall those happier days when she graced the White House as the first lady of the land. The house to which she refers in this letter is the one on the corner of H and Madison Place, northwest, now owned and occupied by the Cosmos Club. What better monument could Mrs. Madison have, what better fate could befall her home, once the center about which revolved the long since silent figures, whose lives and actions were such potent factors in the glorious history of our national development. What better fate than that it should now be the home of an institution the very embodiment of all for which our national life stands, dedicated to the exposition of science and art, philosophy and literature, whose motto might fittingly be written "Nil Nisi bonum."

EXHIBIT No. 1.

"WASHINGTON November 15 1843

*"Dear Madam*

"I received your letter last week enclosing fifteen dollars I enclose you the bills of the slater and glasier: they are both paid I hope soon to have the pleasure to see you in Washington I wish to know if you have any further commands for me before your arrival here, if you have please to send me word and I will excuse them

"I am respectfully

"Your obedient servant

"JOHN SIOUSSAT"

EXHIBIT No. 2.

"I am truly sorry my good friend that the cow should behave so badly, but still hope that she will return to the kind protection of your family—if she has failed however to do so until this time and you think it best you will advertise her (as your own).

"I enclose \$10 to reconcile the little ones for their fatigue as well as for the honor you may do the wanderer by announcing her in a newspaper.

"D. P. MADISON."

"MR. JOHN SIOUSSAT."

EXHIBIT No. 3.

"*Mr. Sioussat,*

"I am glad, Sir, and obliged by your letter of the 5th. telling me that my home was in order through your acceptable attention to the repairs ect. and I wish I could be there to see it but the indisposition of my niece Miss Payne has made it impossible for us to set out for Washington during the last two weeks she is now better, but the weather and roads continue the uncertainty of our leaving home. I therefore enclose you \$40 to reimburse you and if J. M. Cutts does not settle with Mr. Harvey I will do so on the receipt of his bill. I regret having applied to Dr. Lanoir for \$200 when it was inconvenient for him to pay it but have no doubt of his doing so when better health enables him to think of and attend to business, until which we wait for him, and I must still trouble you to care for my little establishment which I would transfer for a time to some friends if I did not still hope to return to it this winter.

"With good wishes for yourself and family.

"D. P. MADISON"

"Montpelier

"Dec. 10th. 40"